

Functional/Sociolinguistics: Pidgins and Creole Linguistics  
Grammatical features of Yokohama Pidgin Japanese: Common characteristics of restricted pidgins.

A pidginized variety of Japanese, called *Yokohamese* or *Japanese Ports Lingo* evolved around 1870 and largely disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century (Holm 1989). This variety (referred to as Yokohama Pidgin Japanese, or YPJ in this paper) was not described widely by trained linguists, however, a small 40-page pedagogical guide (Atkinson 1879) contains a sufficient amount of data to provide some idea of its lexicon and grammatical structure. Although its lexicon was discussed in detail in several linguistic works on YPJ, its grammatical characteristics have been rarely described. In this paper, I focus on the grammatical features of YPJ with regard to the common characteristics of restricted pidgins discussed in Sebba (1997) and Siegel (in press). In addition, the sociohistorical background, the role of second language acquisition, and the influence from Chinese Pidgin English in the pidginization of YPJ are also discussed briefly.

YPJ was produced by the contacts between Japanese and foreigners in the Yokohama area. The Tokugawa Shogunate (later on, the Meiji government) allowed foreigners to borrow land, build buildings, and participate in trading businesses only within the Foreigners' Settlement for 40 years (from 1859 until 1899). There were only 44 foreigners in the settlement in 1860. In 1897, more than 4,000 foreigners were living in the settlement. The demographic data of the foreigners in the settlement (Ishizuka: 1996) shows that the majority were Chinese followed by British, American, German, French, and Dutch.

As regards the common characteristics shared by most restricted pidgins, Siegel (forthcoming) shows eight grammatical features: 1) virtually no productive bound morphology—inflectional or derivational, 2) reduced number of adpositions, pronouns, 3) reduced lexicon, 4) no TMA markers—temporal adverbs used, 5) preverbal negative marker, 6) no complementizers, 7) more reduplicated forms (but reduplication not productive), and 8) some bimorphemic question words. YPJ shares seven out of eight features not including the preverbal negative marker. The preverbal negative marker is not observed in YPJ, since negative markers in YPJ are postverbal as in Japanese, the superstrata language. Sebba (1997) pointed out the correlation between SVO word order and preverbal modification as a reason for preverbal negation markers in the majority of known pidgins. Postverbal modification is preferred for languages with SOV word order. Since YPJ is also a language with SOV word order, universal tendencies explain the postverbal negators in YPJ.

This study provides the description of a rarely studied variety. In conclusion, YPJ is a variety that we can label 'restricted pidgin' in terms of sociohistorical background and linguistic features, as well as its stability as a variety. I also show some shared features between PJY and interlanguage features in general, studied by Klein & Perdue (1997). Some lexical items of YPJ reflect similarity with English pidgins throughout the Pacific. My study shows the influence from Chinese Pidgin English to the vocabulary and grammatical features of YPJ. Interestingly, some of the vocabularies adopted from Chinese Pidgin English still survive in modern Japanese language.

## References

- [Atkinson, Hoffman.] (1879). *Revised and Enlarged Edition of Exercises in the Yokohama Dialect*. Yokohama.
- Holm, John. (1989). *Pidgins and Creoles. Volume II: Reference Survey*. New York: Cambridge UP.
- Ishizuka, Hiromichi. (1996). Yokohama Kyoryuuchizou no Keisei (The formation of Yokohama Settlement). In Yokohamakaikousiryokan (Ed.), *Yokohama Kyoryuuchi to Ibunkakouryuu (Yokohama Settlement and Intercultural Communication)*. Tokyo: Yamakawa.
- Sebba, Mark. (1997). The Character of Pidgins. *Contact Languages: Pidgins and Creoles*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 37-62.
- Siegel, Jeff. (in press). Fiji Pidgins and Pidgins/Creole Origins. In J. den Besten, M. Parkvall & P. Baker (Eds.), *Starting from Scratch*. London: Battlebridge.